

Unimas English debate champs for third time

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KUCHING: For the third consecutive year Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) emerged champion in yesterday's World Style English Language Debate 2007.

Unimas beat two other tertiary institutions - Inti College Sarawak Campus and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia - in a debate on parent-teacher roles in disciplining children.

The champion debaters, Civil Engineering student Quay Wei Kwang and English student Esther Voon, argued that parents and teachers held equal responsibility to discipline children.

The fifth annual championship, which Yayasan Sarawak and Inti College jointly organised, took place at the latter's premises.

"This debate is a good platform for preparing future leaders," said Chief Minister Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, in a speech read out at the event by Public Utilities Minister Dato Sri Awang Tengah Ali Hassan.

"Students are potential leaders in the making. It is an indisputable fact that all our leaders, scientists, technocrats and entrepreneurs today are knowledgeable and skilled people," Taib said.

Describing the local tertiary institutions as "good", Taib added that "we need the best education to

compete with the rest of the world".

"I believe education will determine one's success in life. And now with the challenge of globalisation, gone are the days when we have to depend on our might to earn a living," the chief minister reiterated.

The championship's theme was 'Education - Catalyst for Innovation'.

Also taking part were Universiti Teknologi Mara Sarawak, Swinburne University of Technology, Batu Lintang Teachers' Training Institute.

"The debate encourages graduates to speak and write in English which will make them more marketable in the international arena," said Yayasan Sarawak deputy chairman Datu Abdul Rashid Aziz.

"A good debater is able to use knowledge intelligently and communicate ideas powerfully."

Chief adjudicator Muhammad Abdul Latif, who works at the Student Training Division of International Islamic University, said debates were useful "skill development" for students.

"The world-style debate is very challenging as participants have less than 30 minutes to prepare their arguments," said Muhammad.

"What you saw on the stage was logical thinking done within a few minutes." He applauded students for being able to speculate on their opposition's questions and have answers pre-prepared.

"I hope school children present today will pick up the skills shown by participants," Muhammad said. "Nonetheless, we noted that some speakers in the grand final needed to clarify speeches and listen more carefully before responding to questions."

Meanwhile, Unimas Debating Club president Dhanendran Maheswaran called for more support for students.

"With proper financial and moral support, we can hire trainers and register for international debates. This can also be done through partnerships with other organisations," said Dhanendran, who founded the club.

Earlier, Inti College civil engineering student Marion Jevina Nasa was awarded the best debater.

Also present were Assistant Ministers in the Chief Minister's Department Mohd Naroden Majais and Bolhassan Di, Yayasan Sarawak director, Mohd Abu Bakar Marzuki and Inti College Sarawak managing director William Tan.